

## Pink slip begat an orange liqueur

Kitty Crider

© AMERICAN-STATESMAN STAFF

Local foodie gets into margarita madness

Wednesday, June 27, 2007

In green shorts and shirt, she enters a warehouse space on Burleson Road, where she grabs a homestyle vegetable peeler and helps chef Chris Roberts peel a box of oranges. She uses short strokes as if peeling a carrot; he peels in a circle like with an apple. Both methods work fine and soon a plastic tote box fills with the bright orange fragrant zest of the fruit. They deposit the oranges into another box for discard.

That's when it hits us. In a reverse of the norm, they are tossing the fruit and saving the trash (or peel). And therein lies the secret to her Paula's Texas Orange, a premium liqueur making the local margarita scene. She infuses neutral alcohol with the orange peel of Navels or Valencias. After several days, she strains out the peels and adds filtered city water and sugar and bottles her efforts. The operation is low-tech — bright yellow 5-gallon buckets of infusions, a 55-gallon blue container of alcohol from Florida, a professional hairdryer for sealing the bottled liqueurs — but her background for 25 years was high-tech.

"My last job was at Vignette as a technical architect," Angerstein says. When she was laid off seven years ago, she pondered her future. "My husband and I are foodies," she says. "We wanted to be in that industry, to meet more foodies."

She thought about all those years she worked in high-tech overseas and the many trips she and her husband, Paul Grosso, took to Italy. She remembered the limoncello, the lemon liqueur served after meals. But, upon her return to the States, she was not keen on the bottles of limoncello she found in stores here. Maybe she would just make her own. Her first batch was a Valentine's Day present for her husband, founder of Arbortext, a software company for technical document publishing. Then a friend suggested she capitalize on Texas' margarita madness and make a good medium-priced orange liqueur instead.

"If I can do this, I think people in Austin would buy it," she says. Despite no knowledge about the restaurant or liquor industries, she and her husband jumped into the self-funded venture. It took two years to meet all the city and health and liquor regulations, not that she was the first in Austin. Tito Beveridge of Tito's Handmade Vodka was the trailblazer. "Tito had the machete," she says. "I've just followed the path with a lawnmower."

She produced her orange liqueur a couple of years ago, giving many margarita parties to introduce it. From the beginning, Twin Liquors stocked the product (\$23.99) because it was local and had a great flavor. "She's a longtime Austin resident, a graduate of the University of Texas," says Joe Reynolds, general manager for Twin Liquors. "It's also a great product. The orange really tastes like orange. It makes a great margarita."

Angerstein markets the 80-proof orange liqueur as a drink mixer. "Most find 80 proof too strong, too stiff to sip." However, her lemon liqueur, developed last fall, is a sipper, she says. And she has been amazed at how many Central Texans have been to Italy and know what limoncello is.



Hers has more of a lemon flavor and is not as sweet as Italian ones, she notes. "Most people find those two things improvements, but not all," she says.

Her fans have gotten creative with her products. At parties guests bring cakes or lemon bars made with the liqueur. Others tell her they are cooking duck l'orange with the orange liqueur. James "Hoss" Bowen, sous chef at Moonshine, has incorporated the lemon liqueur in key lime pie, in

lemon ice box pie, in anglaise sauce. He's used the orange in ice cream, cakes, margarita pie. Start off with a couple of tablespoons in a recipe, not half a bottle, he advises. Sub it for some of the water, liquid or other liqueur in recipes.

Angerstein, who says she is not a baker, is flattered by all of these creations and the popularity of the products. (She has also collaborated with Lecia Duke of Chocolat in Fredericksburg for dark chocolates filled with orange liqueur centers. The box of six Paula's Texas Orange chocolates sells for \$6 at Whole Foods Market.)

"We've done really well in the Austin area," says Angerstein, 47. Her products are also sold in Dallas, Houston, San Antonio, and coastal and South Texas areas. She says she sells everything she makes, hundreds of cases a month.

But her licensing only allows her to sell in Texas. She doesn't sell online or participate in national product or television shows.

"We are breaking even, more or less," she says.

Is this a hobby or a job?

A full-time job, says the tanned food entrepreneur. "I was making the product myself until I hired Chris in October."

There's no high stress involved in the mission statement for her low-tech business.

"If it's fun, we'll keep doing it. When it stops, we'll quit."

Pink slips, it appears, are not all bad.